



COMMENTARIES ON 'ROMANS'

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Chapter 4

Verses 1, 2. *“What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.”*

He had said, that the world had become guilty before God, and that all had sinned, and that boasting was excluded and that it was impossible to be saved otherwise than by faith. He is now intent upon showing that this salvation, so far from being matter of shame, was even the cause of a bright glory, and a greater than that through works. For since the being saved, yet with shame, had somewhat of dejection in it, he next takes away this suspicion too. And indeed he has hinted at the same already, by calling it not barely salvation, but “righteousness. Therein” (he says) “is the righteousness of God revealed.” (Romans 1:17.) For he that is saved as a righteous man has a confidence accompanying his salvation. And he calls it not “righteousness” only, but also the setting forth of the righteousness of God. But God is set forth in things which are glorious and shining, and great. However, he nevertheless draws support for this from what he is at present upon, and carries his discourse forward by the method of question. And this he is always in the habit of doing both for clearness sake, and for the sake of confidence in what is said. Above, for instance, he did it, where he says, “What advantage then hath the Jew?” (ib. 3:1.) and, “What then have we more than they?” (ib. 9) and again, “where then is boasting? it is excluded” (Romans 3:27): and here, “what then shall we say that Abraham our father?” etc. Now since the Jews kept turning over and over the fact, that the Patriarch, and friend of God, was the first to receive circumcision, he wishes to show, that it was by faith that he too was justified. And this was quite a vantage ground to insist upon. For a person who had no works, to be justified by faith, was nothing unlikely. But for a person richly adorned with good deeds, not to be made just from hence, but from faith, this is the thing to cause wonder, and to set the power of faith in a strong light. And this is why he passes by all the others, and leads his discourse back to this man. And he calls him “father, as pertaining to the flesh,” to throw them out of the genuine relationship to him, and to pave the Gentiles’ way to kinsmanship with him. And then he says, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory: but not before God.” After saying that God “justified the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith,” and making the same sufficiently sure in what he said before, he now proves it by Abraham more clearly than he promised, and pitches the battle for faith against works, and makes this righteous man the subject of the whole struggle; and that not without special meaning. Wherefore also he sets him up very high by calling him “forefather,” and putting a constraint upon them to comply with him in all points. For, Tell me not, he would say, about the Jews, nor bring this man or that before me. For I will go up to the very head of all, and the source whence circumcision took its rise. For “if Abraham,” he says, “was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory: but not before God.” What is here said is not plain, and so one must make it plainer. For there are two “gloryings,” one of works, and one of faith. After saying then, “if he was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not

before God;” he points out that he might have whereof to glory from faith also, yea and much greater reason for it. For the great power of Paul is especially displayed in this, that he turns what is objected to the other side, and shows that what seemed rather to be on the side of salvation by works, viz. glorying or boldness of claim belonged much more truly to that by faith. For he that glorieth in his works has his own labors to put forward: but he that finds his honor in having faith in God, has a much greater ground for glorying to show, in that it is God that he glorifieth and magnifieth. For those things which the nature of the visible world tells him not of, in receiving these by faith in Him, he at once displays sincere love towards Him, and heralds His power clearly forth. Now this is the character of the noblest soul, and the philosophic spirit, and lofty mind. For to abstain from stealing and murdering is trifling sort of acquirement, but to believe that it is possible for God to do things impossible requires a soul of no mean stature, and earnestly affected towards Him; for this is a sign of sincere love. For he indeed honors God, who fulfills the commandments, but he doth so in a much greater degree who thus followeth wisdom by his faith. The former obeys Him, but the latter receives that opinion of Him which is fitting, and glorifies Him, and feels wonder at Him more than that evinced by works. For that glorying pertains to him that does aright, but this glorifieth God, and lieth wholly in Him. For he glorieth at conceiving great things concerning Him, which redound to His glory. And this is why he speaks of having whereof to glory before God. And not for this only, but also for another reason: for he who is a believer glorieth again, not only because he loveth God in sincerity, but also because he hath enjoyed great honor and love from him. For as he shows his love to Him by having great thoughts about Him, (for this is a proof of love), so doth God also love him, though deserving to suffer for countless sins, not in freeing him from punishment only, but even by making him righteous. He then hath whereof to glory, as having been counted worthy of mighty love.

Verse 4. *“For to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”*

Then is not this last the greatest? he means. By no means: for it is to the believer that it is reckoned. But it would not have been reckoned, unless there were something that he contributed himself. And so he too hath God for his debtor, and debtor too for no common things, but great and high ones. For to show his high-mindedness and spiritual understanding, he does not say “to him that believeth” merely, but

Verse 5. *“To him that believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly.”*

For reflect how great a thing it is to be persuaded and have full confidence that God is able on a sudden not to free a man who has lived in impiety from punishment only, but even to make him just, and to count him worthy of those immortal honors. Do not then suppose that this one is lowered in that it is not reckoned unto the former of grace. For this is the very thing that makes the believer glorious; the fact of his enjoying so great grace, of his displaying so great faith. And note too that the recompense is greater. For to the former a reward is given, to the latter righteousness. Now righteousness is much greater than a reward. For righteousness is a recompense which most fully comprehends several rewards. Therefore after proving this from Abraham, he introduces David also as giving his suffrage in favor of the statement made. What then doth David say? and whom doth he pronounce blessed? is it him that triumphs in works, or him that hath enjoyed grace? him that hath obtained pardon and a gift? And when I speak of blessedness, I mean the chiefest of all good things; for as righteousness is greater than a reward, so is blessedness greater than righteousness. Having then shown that the righteousness is better, not owing to Abraham’s having received it only but also from reasonings (for he hath whereof

to boast, he says, before God); he again uses another mode of showing that it is more dignified, by bringing David in to give his suffrage this way. For he also, he says, pronounces him blessed who is so made righteous, saying,

Verse 7. *“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.”*

And he seems to be bringing a testimony beside his purpose. For it does not say, Blessed are they whose faith is reckoned for righteousness. But he does so on purpose, not through inadvertency, to show the greater superiority. For if he be blessed that by grace received forgiveness, much more is he that is made just, and that exhibits faith. For where blessedness is, there all shame is removed, and there is much glory, since blessedness is a greater degree both of reward and of glory. And for this cause what is the advantage of the other he states as unwritten, “Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace;” but what the advantage of the faithful is, he brings Scriptural testimony to prove, saying, As David saith, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.” What, he means, is it that you say? Is it that “it is not of debt but of grace that he receives forgiveness?” But see it is this person who is pronounced blessed. For he would not have pronounced him so, unless he saw him in the enjoyment of great glory. And he does not say this “forgiveness” then comes upon the circumcision; but what saith he?

Verse 9. *“Cometh this blessedness then” (which is the greater thing) “upon the circumcision or upon the uncircumcision?”*

For now the subject of enquiry is, With whom is this good and great thing to be found; is it with the circumcision or with the uncircumcision? And notice its superiority! For he shows that it is so far from shunning the uncircumcision, that it even dwelt gladly with it before the circumcision. For since he that pronounced it blessed was David, who was himself also in a state of circumcision, and he was speaking to those in that state, see how eagerly Paul contends for applying what he said to the uncircumcised. For after joining the ascription of blessedness to righteousness, and showing that they are one and the same thing, he enquires how Abraham came to be righteous. For if the ascription of blessedness belong to the righteous, and Abraham was made righteous, let us see how he was made righteous, as uncircumcised or circumcised? Uncircumcised, he says. “For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.”

After mentioning the Scripture above (for he said, “What saith the Scripture? Abraham believed in God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,”) here he goes on to secure also the judgment of the speakers, and shows that justification took place in the uncircumcision. Then from these grounds he solves another objection which is starting up. For if when in uncircumcision, one might say he was justified, to what purpose was the circumcision brought in?

Verse 11. *“He received it,” he says, “a sign and seal of the righteousness that was by the faith, which he had being yet uncircumcised.”*

See you how he shows the Jews to be as it were of the class of parasites (i.e. guests), rather than those in uncircumcision, and that these were added to the others? For if he was justified and crowned while in uncircumcision, the Jews came in afterwards, Abraham is then the father first of the uncircumcised,

which through faith appertain to him, and then of those in the circumcision. For he is a forefather of two lines. See you faith lightening up? for till it came the patriarch was not justified. See you the uncircumcision offering no hindrance? for he was uncircumcised, yet was not hindered from being justified. The circumcision therefore is behind the faith. And why wonder that it is behind the faith, when it is even behind the uncircumcision. Nor is it behind faith only, but very far inferior to it, even so far as the sign is to the reality of which it is the sign; for instance, as the seal is to the soldier. And why, he says, did he want a seal then? He did not want it himself. For what purpose then did he receive it? With a view to his being the father alike of them that believe in uncircumcision and in circumcision. But not of those in circumcision absolutely: wherefore he goes on to say, "To them who are not of the circumcision only? For if to the uncircumcised, it is not in that he is uncircumcised that he is their father, although justified in uncircumcision; but in that they imitated his faith; much less is it owing to circumcision that he is the forefather of those in the state of circumcision, unless faith also be added. For he says that the reason of his receiving circumcision was that either of us two parties might have him for a forefather, and that those in the uncircumcision might not thrust aside those in the circumcision. See how the former had him for their forefather first. Now if the circumcision be of dignity owing to its preaching righteousness, the uncircumcision even hath no small preeminence in having received it before the circumcision. Then wilt thou be able to have him as a forefather when thou walkest in the steps of that faith, and art not contentious, nor a causer of division in bringing in the Law. What faith? tell me.

Verse 12. *"Which he had being yet uncircumcised."*

Here again he lays low the lofty spirit of the Jews by reminding them of the time of the justification. And he well says, "the steps," that you as well as Abraham may believe in the resurrection of bodies that are dead. For he also displayed his faith upon this point. And so if you reject the uncircumcision, be informed for certain that the circumcision is of no more use unto you. For if you follow not in the steps of his faith, though you were ten thousand times in a state of circumcision, you will not be Abraham's offspring. For even he received the circumcision for this end, that the man in a state of uncircumcision might not cast thee off. Do not then demand this of him too." For it was you whom the thing was to be an assistance to, not he. But he calls it a sign of the righteousness. And this also was for thy sake, since now it is not even this: for thou then wert in need of bodily signs, but now there is no need of them. "And was it not possible," one might say, "from his faith to learn the goodness of his soul?" Yes, it was possible but thou stoodest in need of this addition also. For since thou didst not imitate the goodness of his soul, and weft not able to see it, a sensible circumcision was given thee, that, after having become accustomed to this of the body, thou mightest by little and little be led on to the true love of wisdom in the soul also, and that having with much seriousness received it as a very great privilege, thou mightest be instructed to imitate and revere thine ancestor. This object then had God not only in the circumcision, but in all the other rites. the sacrifices, I mean, and the sabbath, and feasts. Now that it was for thy sake that he received the circumcision, learn from the sequel. For after saying that he received a sign and a seal, he gives the reason also as follows. That he might be the father of the circumcision - to those who received the spiritual circumcision also, since if you have only this (i.e. the carnal), no farther good will come to you. For this is then a sign, when the reality of which it is the sign is found with thee, that is, faith; since if thou have not this, the sign to thee has no longer the power of a sign, for what is it to be the sign of? or what the seal of, when there is nothing to be sealed? much as if you were to show one a purse with a seal to it, when there was nothing laid up within. And so the

circumcision is ridiculous if there be no faith within. For if it be a sign of righteousness, but you have not righteousness, then you have no sign either. For the reason of your receiving a sign was that you might seek diligently for that reality whereof you have the sign: so that if you had been sure of diligently seeking thereafter without it, then you had not needed it. But this is not the only thing that circumcision proclaims, namely righteousness, but righteousness in even an uncircumcised man. Circumcision then does but proclaim, that there is no need of circumcision.

Verse 14. *“For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.”*

He had shown that faith is necessary, that it is older than circumcision, that it is more mighty than the Law, that it establisheth the Law. For if all sinned, it was necessary: if one being uncircumcised was justified, it is older: if the knowledge of sin is by the Law and yet it was without the Law made evident, it is more mighty: if it has testimony born to it by the Law, and establisheth the Law, it is not opposed to it, but friendly and allied to it. Again, he shows upon other grounds too that it was not even possible by the Law to attain to the inheritance, and after having matched it with the circumcision, and gained it the victory, he brings it besides into contrast with the Law in these words, “For if they which are of the Law be heirs, faith is made void.” To prevent them anyone from saying that one may have faith and also keep up the Law, he shows this to be impracticable. For he that clings to the Law, as if of saving force, does disparagement to faith’s power; and so he says, “faith is made void,” that is, there is no need of salvation by grace. For then it cannot show forth its own proper power; “and the promise is made of none effect.” This is because the Jew might say, What need have I of faith? If then this held, the things that were promised, would be taken away along with faith. See how in all points he combats with them from the early times and from the Patriarch. For having shown from thence that righteousness and faith went together in the inheritance, he now shows that the promise did likewise. For to prevent the Jew from saying, What matters it to me if Abraham was justified by faith? Paul says, neither can what you are interested with, the promise of the inheritance, come into effect apart from it: which was what scared them most. But what promise is he speaking of? That of his being “the heir of the world,” and that in him all should be blessed. And how does he say that this promise is made of none effect?

Verse 15. *“Because the Law worketh wrath: for where no Law is, there is no transgression.”*

Now if it worketh wrath, and renders them liable for transgression, it is plain that it makes them so to a Curse also. But they that are liable under a curse, and punishments, and transgression, are not worthy of inheriting, but of being punished and rejected. What then happens? faith comes, drawing on it the grace, so that the promise comes into effect. For where grace is, there is a remitting, and where remitting is, there is no punishment. Punishment then being removed, and righteousness succeeding from faith, there is no obstacle to our becoming heirs of the promise.

Verse 16. “Therefore it is of faith,” he says, “that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.”

You see that it is not the Law only that faith establisheth, but the promise of God also that it will not allow to fall to the ground. But the Law, on the other hand, by being kept to unseasonably, makes even the faith of none effect, and hindereth the promise. By this he shows that faith, so far from being

superfluous, is even necessary to that degree, that without it there is no being saved. For the Law worketh wrath, as all have transgressed it. But this doth not even suffer wrath to arise at all: for "where no Law is," he says, "there is no transgression." Do you see how he not only does away with sin after it has existed, but does not even allow it to be produced? And this is why he says "by grace." For what end? Not with a view to their being put to shame, but to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed. Here he lays down two blessings, both that the things given are sure, and also that they are to all the seed, so gathering in those of (he Gentiles, and showing that the Jews are without, if they contend against the faith. For this is a surer thing than that. For faith doeth thee no hurt (be not contentious), but even now thou art in danger from the Law, it preserves thee. Next having said, "to all the seed," he defines what seed he meaneth. That which is of faith, he says, so blending with it their relationship to the Gentiles, and showing that they must not be proud of Abraham who do not believe as he did. And see a third thing which faith effected besides. It makes the relationship to that righteous man more definite, and holds him up as the ancestor of a more numerous issue. And this is why he does not say merely Abraham, but "our father," ours who believe. Then he also seals what he has said by the testimony -

Verse 17. *"As it is written," he says, "I have made thee a father of many nations."*

Do you observe that this was ordered by Providence from of old? What then, he means, does He say this on account of the Ishmaelites, or of the Amalekites, or of the Hagarenes? This however, as he goes on he proves more distinctly not to be said of these. But as yet he presses forward to another point, by which means he proves this very thing by defining the mode of the relationship, and establishing it with a vast reach of mind. What then does he say?

"Before Him Whom he believed, even God."

But his meaning is something of this sort, as God is not the God of a part, but the Father of all, so is he also. And again, as God is a father not by way of the relationship of nature, but by way of the affiance of faith, so is he also inasmuch as it is obedience that makes him father of us all. For since they thought nothing of this relationship, as clinging to that grosser one, he shows that this is the truer relationship by lifting his discourse up to God. And along with this he makes it plain that this was the reward of faith that he received. Consequently, if it were not so, and he were the father of all the dwellers upon earth, the expression before (or answering to) would be out of place, while the gift of God would be curtailed. For the "before," is equivalent to "alike with." Since where is the marvel, pray, in a man's being the father of those sprung from himself? This is what is every man's lot. But the extraordinary thing is, that those whom by nature he had not, them he received by the gift of God. And so if thou wouldest believe that the patriarch was honored, believe that he is the father of all. But after saying, "before Him Whom he believed, even God," he does not pause here, but goes on thus; "Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were," so laying beforehand his foundations for discoursing upon the resurrection. And it was serviceable also to his present purpose. For if He could "quicken the dead" and bring in "those things that were not as though they were," then could He also make those who were not born of him to be his children. And this is why he does not say, bringing in the things which are not, but calling them, so showing the greater ease of it. For as it is easy to us to call the things which are by name, so to Him it is easy, yea, and much easier to give a subsistence to things that are not. But after saying, that the gift of God was great and unspeakable, and having discoursed

concerning His power, he shows farther that Abraham's faith was deserving of the gift, that you may not suppose him to have been honored without reason. And after raising the attention of his hearers to prevent the Jew from clamoring and making doubts, and saying, "And how is it possible for those who are not children to become children?" he passes on to speak of the patriarch, and says,

Verse 18. *"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be."*

How was it that he "believed in hope against hope?" It was against man's hope, in hope which is of God. (For he is showing the loftiness of the action, and leaving no room for disbelieving what is said.) Things which are contrary to one another, yet faith blends them together. But if he were speaking about such as were from Ishmael, this language would be superfluous: for it was not by faith but by nature that they were begotten. But he bringeth Isaac also before us. For it was not concerning those nations that he believed, but concerning him who was to be from his barren wife. If then it be a reward to be father of many nations, it would be so of those nations clearly of whom he so believed. For that you may know that he is speaking of them, listen to what follows.

Verse 19. "And being not weak in faith, he considered his own body now dead."

Do you see how he gives the obstacles, as well as the high spirit of the righteous man which surmounts all? "Against hope," he says, was that which was promised: this is the first obstacle. For Abraham had no other person who had received a son in this way to look to. They that were after him looked to him, but he to no one, save to God only. And this is why he said, "against hope." Then, "his body now dead." This is a second. And, "the deadness of Sarah's womb." This is a third, aye and a fourth obstacle.

Verse 20. *"But he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief."*

For God neither gave any proof nor made any sign, but there were only bare words promising such things as nature did not hold out any hopes of. Yet still he says, "he staggered not." He does not say, "He did not disbelieve," but, "He staggered not," that is, he neither doubted nor hesitated though the hindrances were so great. From this we learn, that if God promise even countless impossibilities, and he that heareth doth not receive them, it is not the nature of things that is to blame, but the unreasonableness of him who receiveth them not. "But was strong in faith." See the pertinacity of Paul. For since this discourse was about them that work and them that believe, he shows that the believer works more than the other, and requires more power, and great strength, and sustains no common degree of labor. For they counted faith worthless, as having no labor in it. Insisting then upon this, he shows that it is not only he that succeeds in temperance, or any other virtue of this sort, but he that displays faith also who requires even greater power. For as the one needs strength to beat off the reasonings of intemperance, so hath the faithful also need of a soul endued with power, that he may thrust aside the suggestions of unbelief. How then did he become "strong?" By trusting the matter, he replies, to faith and not to reasonings: else he had fallen. But how came he to thrive in faith itself? By giving glory to God, he says.

Verse 21. *"And being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."*

Abstaining then from curious questionings is glorifying God, as indulging in them is transgressing. But if by entering into curious questions, and searching out things below, we fail to glorify Him, much more if we be over curious in the matter of the Lord's generation, shall we suffer to the utmost for our insolence. For if the type of the resurrection is not to be searched into, much less those unutterable and awestrking subjects. And he does not use the word "believed" merely, but, "being fully persuaded." For such a thing is faith, it is clearer than the demonstration by reasons, and persuades more fully. For it is not possible for another reasoning succeeding to it to shake it afterwards. He indeed that is persuaded with words may have his persuasion altered too by them. But he that stays himself upon faith, hath henceforward fortified his hearing against words that may do hurt to it. Having said then, that he was justified by faith, he shows that he glorified God by that faith; which is a thing specially belonging to a good life. For, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16.) But lo! this is shown also to belong to faith! Again, as works need power, so doth faith. For in their case the body often shareth the toil, but in the faith the well-doing belongeth to the soul alone. And so the labor is greater, since it has no one to share the struggles with it. Do you observe how he shows that all that belonged to works attached to faith in a far greater degree, as having whereof to glory before God, - requiring power and labor, - and again, glorifying God? And after saying, that "what He had promised, He is able also to perform," he seems to me to speak beforehand of things to come. For it is not things present merely that He promises, but also things to come. For the present are a type of the other. It is then a sign of a weak, little, and pitiful mind not to believe. And so when any make faith a charge against us, let us make want of faith a charge against them in return, as pitiful, and little-minded, and foolish, and weak, and no better in disposition than asses. For as believing belongs to a lofty and high-born soul, so disbelieving doth to a most unreasonable and worthless one, and such as is sunken drowsily into the senselessness of brutes. Therefore having left these, let us imitate the Patriarch, and glorify God as he gave Him glory. And what does it mean, gave Him glory? He held in mind His majesty, His boundless power. And having formed a just conception of Him, he was also "fully persuaded" about His promises.

Let us then also glorify Him by faith as well as by works, that we may also attain to the reward of being glorified by Him. "For them that glorify Me, I will glorify" (1 Samuel 2:30), He says: and indeed, if there were no reward, the very privilege of glorifying God were itself a glory. For if men take a pride in the mere fact of speaking eulogies of kings, even if there be no other fruit of it; consider how glorious it must be, that our Lord is glorified by us: as again, how great a punishment to cause Him to be by our means blasphemed. And yet this very being glorified, He wisheth to be brought about for our sakes, since He doth not need it Himself. For what distance dost thou suppose to be between God and man? as great as that between men and worms? or as great as between Angels and worms? But when I have mentioned a distance even thus great, I have not at all expressed it: since to express its greatness is impossible. Would you, now, wish to have a great and marked reputation among worms? Surely not. If then thou that lovest glory, wouldest not wish for this, how should He Who is far removed from this passion, and so much farther above us, stand in need of glory from thee? Nevertheless, free from the want of it as He is, still He saith that He desireth it for thy sake. For if He endured for thy sake to become a slave, why wonder that He upon the same ground layeth claim to the other particulars also? For He counts nothing unworthy of Himself which may be conducive to our salvation. Since then we aware of this, let us shun sin altogether, because by reason of it He is blasphemed. For it says, "flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent: if thou comest too near unto it, it will bite thee" (Ecclus. 21:2): for it is not it that comes to us, but we that desert to it. God has so ordered things that the Devil should not prevail

over us by compulsion: since else none would have stood against his might. And on this account He set him a distant abode, as a kind of robber and tyrant. And unless he find a person unarmed and solitary for his assaults, he doth not venture to attack him. Except he see us traveling by the desert," he has not the courage to come near us. But the desert and place of the Devil is nothing else than sin. We then have need of the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, not only that we may not get evil intreated, but that ever should he be minded to leap upon us, we may cut off his head. Need we have of continual prayer that he may be bruised under our feet, for he is shameless and full of hardihood, and this though he fights from beneath. But yet even so he gets the victory: and the reason is, that we are not earnestly set upon being above his blows. For he has not even the power to lift himself very high, but he trails along upon the ground. And of this the serpent is a type. But if God set him in that rank from the beginning, much more will He now. But if thou dost not know what fighting from beneath may be, I also will try to explain to thee the manner of this war. What then may this fighting "from beneath" (John 8:23) be? It is standing upon the lower things of the world to buffet us, such as pleasure and riches and all the goods of this life. And for this reason, whoever he seeth flying toward heaven, first, he will not even be able to leap so far. Secondly, even if he should attempt he will speedily fall. For he hath no feet; be not afraid: he hath no wings; fear not. He trails upon the earth, and the things of the earth. Do thou then have naught in common with the earth, and thou wilt not need labor even. For he hath not any knowledge of open fight: but as a serpent he hideth him in the thorns, nestling evermore in the "deceitfulness of riches." (Matthew 13:22.) And if thou wert to cut away the thorns, he will easily be put to flight, being detected: and if thou knowest how to charm him with the inspired charms he will straightway be struck. For we have, we surely have, spiritual charms, even the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the might of the Cross. This charm will not only bring the serpent out of his lurking places, and cast him into the fire (Acts 28:5), but even wounds it healeth. But if some that have said this Name have not been healed, it came of their own little faith, and was not owing to any weakness in what they said. For some did throng Jesus and press. Him (Luke 8:44, 45), and got no good therefrom. But the woman with an issue, without even touching His Body, but merely the hem of His garment, stanchd a flux of blood of so long standing. This Name is fearful alike to devils, and to passions, and to diseases. In this then let us find a pleasure, herewith let us fortify ourselves. It was thus Paul waxed great, and yet he was of the like nature with ourselves, so the whole choir of the Disciples. But faith had made him a perfectly different person, and so much did it abound in them, that even their garments had great force. (Acts 19:12.) What excuse then shall we deserve, if even the shadows and the garments of those men drave off death (Acts 5:15), but our very prayers do not so much as bring the passions down? What is the reason a of it? Our temper is widely different. For what nature gives, is as much ours as theirs. For he was born and brought up just as we are, and dwelt upon the earth and breathed the air, as we do. But in other points he was far greater and better than we are, in zeal, in faith, and love. Let us then imitate him. Let us allow Christ to speak through us. He desireth it more than we do: and by reason of this, He prepared this instrument, and would not have it remain useless and idle, but wisheth to keep it ever in hand. Why then dost thou not make it serviceable for the Maker's hand, but lettest it become unstrung, and makest it relaxed through luxury, and unfittest the whole harp for His use, when thou oughtest to keep the members of it in full stretch, and well strung, and braced with spiritual salt. For if Christ see our soul thus attuned, He will send forth His sounds even by it. And when this taketh place, then shalt thou see Angels leaping for joy, and Archangels too, and the Cherubim. Let us then become worthy of His spotless hands. Let us invite Him to strike even upon our heart. For He rather needeth not any inviting. Only make it worthy of that touch, and He will be foremost in running unto thee. For if in consideration of their attainments not yet reached, He runneth

to them (for when Paul was not yet so advanced He yet framed that praise for him) when He seeth one fully furnished, what is there that He will not do? But if Christ shall sound forth and the Spirit shall indeed light upon us, and we shall be better than the heaven, having not the sun and the moon fixed in our body, but the Lord of both sun and moon and angels dwelling in us and walking in us. And this I say, not that we may raise the dead, or cleanse the lepers, but that we may show forth what is a greater miracle than all these - charity. For wheresoever this glorious thing shall be there the Son taketh up His abode along with the Father, and the grace of the Spirit frequenteth. For "where two or three are gathered together in My Name," it says, "there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20.) Now this is for great affection, and for those that are very intimate friends, to have those whom they love on either side of them. Who then, he means, is so wretched as not to wish to have Christ in the midst? We that are at variance with one another! And haply some one may ridicule me and ask, What is it that you mean? Do you not see that we are all within the same walls, and under the same enclosure of the Church, standing under the same fold with unanimity; that no one fighteth, that we be under the same shepherd, crying aloud in common, listening in common to what is being said, sending up our prayers in common, - and yet mention fighting and variance? Fighting I do mention, and I am not mad nor out of my sober mind. For I see what I sees and know that we are under the same fold, and the same shepherd. Yet for this cause I make the greater lamentation, because, though there are so many circumstances to draw us together, we are at variance. And what sedition, it will be said, see you here? Here truly I see none. But when we have broken up, such an one accuses such another, another is openly insulting, another grudges, another is fraudulent, and rapacious, and violent, another indulges in unlawful love, another frames countless schemes of deceit. And if it were possible to open. your souls, then ye would see all things distinctly, and know that I am not mad. Do you not see in a camp, that when it is peace, men lay down their arms and cross over unarmed and undefended into the camp of the enemy, but when they are protected with arms, and with guards and outposts, the I nights are spent in watching, and the fires are kept continually burning, this state of things is no longer peace but war? Now this is what may be seen among us. For we are on our guard against one another, and fear one another and talk each of us into his neighbor's ear. And if we see any one else present, we hold our peace, and draw in all we were going to say. And this is not like men that feel confidence, but like those that are strictly on their guard. "But these things we do (some one may say,) not to do wrong, but to escape having it done us." Yea, for this I grieve, that living as we do among brethren, we need be on our guard against having wrong done us; and we light up so many fires, and set guards and out-posts! The reason is the prevalence of falsehood, the prevalence of craft, the prevailing secession of charity, and war without truce. By this means one may find men that feel more confidence in Gentiles than in Christians. And yet, how ashamed we ought to be of this; how we ought to weep and bewail at it! "What then, some may say, is to become of me? such and such an one is of ungainly temper, and vexatious." Where then is your religion? where are the laws of the Apostles, which bid us bear one another's burdens? (Galatians 6:2.) For if you have no notion of dealing well by your brother, when are you to be able to do so by a stranger? If you have not learnt how to treat a member of your own self, when are you likely to draw to you any from without, and to knit him to yourself? But how am I to feel? I am vexed exceedingly almost to tears, for I could have sent forth large fountains from mine eyes (Jeremiah 9:1), as that Prophet says, seeing as I do countless enemies upon the plain more galling than those he saw. For he said, upon seeing the aliens coming against them, "My bowels! I am pained at my bowels." (ib. 4:19.) But when I see men arrayed under one leader, yet standing against one another, and biting and tearing their own members, some for money's sake, and some for glory's, and others quite at random ridiculing and mocking and wounding one another in countless ways, and corpses too worse treated than those in war, and that it is

but the bare name of the brethren that is now left, myself feel my inability to devise any lament fitting such a catastrophe as this! Reverence now, oh reverence, this Table whereof we all are partakers! (1 Corinthians 10:16-18.) Christ, Who was slain for us, the Victim that is placed thereon! (Hebrews 13:10.) Robbers when they once partake of salt, cease to be robbers in regard to those with whom they have partaken thereof; that table changes their dispositions, and men fiercer than wild beasts it makes gentler than lambs. But we though partakers of such a Table, and sharers of such food as that, arm ourselves against one another, when we ought to arm against him who is carrying on a war against all of us, the devil. Yet this is why we grow weaker and he stronger every day. For we do not join to form in defense against him, but along with him we stand against each other, and use him as a commander for such hostile arrays, when it is he alone that we ought to be fighting with. But now letting him pass, we bend the bow against our brethren only. What bows, you will say? Those of the tongue and the mouth. For it is not javelins and darts only, but words too, keener far than darts, that inflict wounds. And how shall we be able to bring this war to an issue? one will ask. If thou perceivest that when thou speakest ill of thy brother, thou art casting up mire out of thy mouth, if thou perceivest that it is a member of Christ that thou art slandering, that thou art eating up thine own flesh (Psalm 27:2), that thou art making the judgment set for thee more bitter (fearful and uncorrupt as it is), that the shaft is killing not him that is smitten, but thyself that shot it forth. But he did you some wrong, may be, and injured you? Groan at it, and do not rail. Weep, not for the wrong done thee, but for his perdition, as thy Master also wept at Judas, not because Himself was to be crucified, but because he was a traitor. Has he insulted thee and abused thee? Beseech God for him, that He may speedily become appeased toward him. He is thy brother, he is a member of thee, the fruit of the same pangs as thyself, he has been invited to the same Table. But he only makes fresh assaults upon me, it may be said. Then is thy reward all the greater for this. On this ground then there is the best reason for abating one's anger, since it is a mortal wound that he has received, since the devil hath wounded him. Do not thou then give a further blow, nor cast thyself down together with him. For so long as thou standest thou hast the means of saving him also. But if thou dash thyself down by insulting deeds in return, who is then to lift you both up? Will he that is wounded? Nay, for he cannot, now that he is down. But wilt thou that art fallen along with him? And how shall thou, that couldest not support thine own self, be able to lend a hand to another? Stand therefore now nobly, and setting thy shield before thee, and draw him, now he is dead, away from the battle by thy long-suffering. Rage hath wounded him, do not thou also wound him, but cast out even that first shaft. For if we associate with each other on such terms, we shall soon all of us become healthful. But if we arm ourselves against one another, there will be no farther need even of the devil to our ruin. For all war is an evil, and civil war especially. But this is a sorer evil than even a civil one, as our mutual rights are greater than those of citizenship, yea, than of kindred itself. Of old, Abel's brother slew him and shed the blood of his kinsman. But this murder is more lawless than that, in that the rights of kinsmanship are greater, and the death a sorer evil. For he wounded the body, but thou hast whetted thy sword against the soul. "But thou didst first suffer ill." Yes, but it is not suffering ill, but doing it, that is really suffering ill. Now consider; Cain was the slayer, Abel was the slain. Who then was the dead? He that after death crieth, (for He saith, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to Me,") (Genesis 4:10), or he who while he lived was yet trembling and in fear? He was, assuredly he was, more an object of pity than any dead man. Seest thou how to be wronged is better, though a man come even to be murdered? learn that to wrong is worse, though a man should be strong enough even to kill. He smote and cast down his brother, yet the latter was crowned, the former was punished. Abel was made away with and slain wrongfully, but he even when dead accused (comp. John 5:45), and convicted and overcame: the other, though alive, was speechless, and was ashamed, and was convicted, and effected the opposite of

what he intended. For he made away with him because he saw him beloved, expecting to cast him out of the love also. Yet he did but make the love more intense, and God sought him more when dead, saying, "Where is thy brother Abel?" (Genesis 4:9.) For thou hast not extinguished the desire towards him by thine envy, but hast kindled it up the more. Thou hast not lessened his honor by slaying him, but hast made it the more ample. Yet before this God had even made him subject to thee, whereas since thou hast slain him, even when dead, he will take vengeance upon thee. So great was my love towards him. Who then was the condemned person, the punisher or the punished? He that enjoyed so great honor from God, or he that was given up to a certain novel and unexpected punishment? Thou didst not fear him (he would say) while alive, thou shalt fear him therefore when dead. Thou didst not tremble when on the point of thrusting with the sword. Thou shall be seized, now the blood is shed, with a continual trembling. While alive he was thy servant, and thou showedst no forbearance to him. For this reason, now he is dead, he hath become a master thou shalt be afraid of. Thinking then upon these things, beloved, let us flee from envy, let us extinguish malice, let us recompense one another with charity, that we may reap the blessings rising from it, both in the present life and the life which is to come, by the grace and love toward man, etc. Amen.

Verse 23. *"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him for righteousness; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."*

After saying many great things of Abraham, and his faith, and righteousness, and honor before God, lest the hearer should say, What is this to us, for it is he that was justified? he places us close to the Patriarch again. So great is the power of spiritual words. For of one of the Gentiles, one who was recently come near, one who had done no work, he not only says that he is in nothing inferior to the Jew who believes (i.e. as a Jew), but not even to the Patriarch, but rather, if one must give utterance to the wondrous truth, even much greater. For so noble is our birth, that his faith is but the type of ours. And he does not say, If it was reckoned unto him, it is probable it will be also to us, that he might not make it matter of syllogism. But he speaks in authentic words of the divine law, and makes the whole a declaration of the Scripture. For why was it written, he says, save to make us see (that we also were justified in this way? For it is the same God Whom we have believed, and upon the same matters, if it be not in the case of the same persons. And after speaking of our faith, he also mentions God's unspeakable love towards man, which he ever presents on all sides, bringing the Cross before us. And this he now makes plain by saying,

Verse 25. *"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."*

See how after mentioning the cause of His death, he makes the same cause likewise a demonstration of the resurrection. For why, he means, was He crucified? Not for any sin of His own. And this is plain from the Resurrection. For if He were a sinner, how should He have risen? But if He rose, it is quite plain that He was not a sinner. But if He was not a sinner, how came He to be crucified? - For others, - and if for others, then surely he rose again. Now to prevent your saying, How, when liable for so great sins, came we to be justified? he points out One that blotteth out all sins, that both from Abraham's faith, whereby he was justified, and from the Savior's Passion, whereby we were freed from our sins, he might confirm what he had said. And after mentioning His Death, he speaks also of His Resurrection. For the purpose of

His dying was not that He might hold us liable to punishment and in condemnation, but that He might do good unto us. For this cause He both died and rose again, that He might make us righteous.